

General Permitting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Disclaimer

This document is intended to serve as guidance only, and does not take the place of any rule or law. This document may not reflect changes in rule or law that occur after the date noted below. Please contact DNR for the most recent applicable rules.

Finally, Linn and Polk Counties have their own permit programs and may have differing or additional guidance.

1. After what date does an emission unit need to obtain a permit?

Any piece of equipment or control equipment that emits any regulated pollutant constructed, modified, reconstructed, or altered after September 23, 1970, is required to obtain a construction permit. If only volatile organic compounds (VOC) were emitted, a construction permit was not needed for those units installed before April 22, 1987; however, changes in these units now require a permit. In addition, the lack of emission limits may now subject these units, and even the entire facility, to additional regulations.

2. When did The Iowa DNR - Air Quality Bureau (Department) take over the Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) program?

The Department was given authority for the PSD program on April 22, 1987. Prior to this date, EPA implemented the PSD program in Iowa. The Department has since taken over the management of those PSD permits which EPA issued.

3. Since there is no longer an ambient air standard for total suspended particulate (TSP), is TSP still regulated?

Yes. Emission standards for particulate emissions remain in the federal and state codes for TSP, also identified as Particulate Matter (PM). In addition PSD has a significance level of 25 tpy for TSP as well as 15 tpy for PM₁₀ and 10 tpy for PM_{2.5} with BACT requirements and increments for both.

4. Is there a de minimus level for permitting?

No. However, there are exemptions for many types of sources. The list of exemptions can be found in the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) Section at 567 of the Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) Chapter 22.1(2).

5. Can a variance from the permit requirements be obtained?

It is possible to obtain a variance, depending on the circumstances. Details on variances can be found at 567 IAC 21.2 or by contacting the Department's air compliance staff.

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6. Does the Department permit the emission unit or the emission point?

The Department writes a permit for each individual emission point. If an emission unit source has more than one emission point, then each emission point will need a permit.

7. Can permit applications be submitted electronically?

Yes, permit applications can be submitted electronically using Iowa EASY Air, and is required by rule as of January 1, 2023. Guidance for applying for air construction permit applications using the Iowa EASY Air system can be located here.

8. Why do I see changing permits? Do permit writers follow a standard operating procedure? Is there a manual?

The department makes a concerted effort to standardize permitting. The Department has developed a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual. The permit writers have a three to six month training program when first hired as well as gaining the skills to handle more difficult projects by doing increasing more complicated projects over the years. In addition, there are weekly individual meetings to discuss current projects and a weekly section wide meeting to coordinate permitting activities. Finally, every draft permit is reviewed by one of the senior engineers to assure consistency and accuracy. Despite all this effort, requirements do change over time and each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis which can result in dramatically different permit conditions for what may seem like similar equipment.

9. How much time does a company have for a request for additional information? What happens in this process?

Our rules, at 567 Iowa Administrative Code 22.2, allow a company up to 60 days to provide additional information. The Department will continue to work on the project as much as possible while we are waiting for information and will contact the facility intermittently to see if progress is being made in collecting the additional information or if the facility has questions on what is being requested. However, if the facility takes 60 days for critical information the Department cannot continue review. This is a common reason we are unable to meet permitting goals and project timelines. Failure to receive the information within the 60-days will result in denial of the project.

10. What is a stationary source?

A stationary source means any building, structure, facility, or installation which emits or may emit any regulated air pollutant as specified in 567 Iowa Administrative Code 24.100.